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How the U.N. spends your tax bucks

LOFTON UNLEASHED

By John Lofton

To tell the truth, when I dropped by the National Academy of Sciences and National Academy of Engineers symposium on "nuclear winter," I did not expect to see my tax dollars at work in the form of a Soviet employee of the United Nations.

The reason I went to this meeting — which was held to discuss the possible effects of nuclear war on the world's climate — was to hear one of the speakers, astronomer Carl Sagan, say something stupid, which he did.

In a question-and-answer period, when I asked Mr. Sagan to characterize the Soviet military threat to the United States, and specifically, to say what he thinks should be done about the Red Army's brutal invasion of Afghanistan, he ignored the first question but did respond to the second question. Comparing the Soviet atrocities in Afghanistan to what the United States did in Vietnam, Mr. Sagan said he is "appalled" by both of these actions.

When I asked if he was seriously likening our actions in Vietnam — which were taken to prevent the communization of Indochina — to the Soviet's actions in Afghanistan, the purpose of which is to communize that country, Mr. Sagan refused to reply. And several people in the audience hissed my question.

But, back to my tax dollars (and yours) which I saw at work. Or, to put it more accurately, not at work. Or at least not at work in any conventional sense of the word.

During one of the breaks between sessions, when I attempted to question one of the symposium attendees — a Mr. Timour Dmitrichev of the Office of the U.N. Secretariat, the Disarmament Affairs Department — he smiled, motioned towards the lobby, and said: "Let's have some tea." Fine. But when I tried to interview him, to get his views on the subject of nuclear war and nuclear winter, he clammed up explaining that "staff rules" prohibited him from talking to the press.

Mr. Dmitrichev, who said he is from the Soviet Union, did say, however, that he was at this symposium because the U.N. General Assembly has requested a report on nuclear war. But no, he said, he was writing no report on the symposium. He said he was attending it simply to "accumulate knowledge" on this subject.

Now, since Mr. Dmitrichev's trip to Washington struck me as a typically worthless junket and waste of the American taxpayer's money (we pay 25 percent of the cost of the U.N.), I called his immediate superior at the U.N., Ben Sanders, who is from the Netherlands and is director of the Information and Studies Branch of the Disarmament Affairs Department of the Office of the U.N. Secretariat.

And what I wanted to know was this: Why was it necessary for Mr. Dmitrichev to fly to Washington, stay overnight and personally attend this symposium (about which he was writing no report), when he could have ordered, by mail, copies of the tapes of this conference and copies of the papers

presented?

Well, Mr. Sanders is not very happy with my question, to put it mildly. Explaining that Mr. Dmitrichev is a senior political officer, an official, a bureaucrat who makes about \$55,000 a year, he is flustered when I ask: Just exactly what is Mr. Dmitrichev's job? Says Mr. Sanders: "I can't give

you a job description. He attends meetings, writes reports, he — well, what does an official do?"

When Mr. Sanders starts to tell me how the U.N. General Assembly has ordered a study of nuclear war, I cut him off saying that I know, Mr. Dmitrichev has already told me this. I reiterate my question about why couldn't Mr. Dmitrichev have simply ordered, by mail, copies of the tapes of the speeches and papers delivered at this symposium?

Mr. Sanders: "Are you questioning our procedure?"

Me: "Yes, definitely!"

Then, his voice getting louder and sounding like a bellicose recorded Amtrak scheduling announcement, Mr. Sanders repeats that the U.N. General Assembly has asked for a report on nuclear war.

Me: "But why couldn't Mr. Dmitrichev order the symposium tapes and papers by mail?"

Mr. Sanders: (really yelling now) "What the hell are you —!"

Me: (Also yelling) "Look, my country pays 25 percent of your salary and Mr. Dmitrichev's, so don't yell at me, please!"

Saying that I have "a cheek" telling him how to run his (sic) business, Mr. Sanders questions whether ordering the tapes and papers by mail would have been cheaper, noting that at the U.N. — as in any bureaucracy — the "absolute minimum cost" of writing a letter is \$10 for each letter. And yes, it's true, he says, that Mr. Dmitrichev did not write a report about the symposium but had to be at the meeting "to know where to go for various bits of documentation" and to show that the U.N. had an interest in this meeting.

When I ask: But why send a Soviet down here to cover this meeting? Mr. Sanders asks: Why not? He says they have many groups dealing with this subject and it was Mr. Dmitrichev's turn to go. And yes, he says, he thinks Mr. Dmitrichev will give an honest report, but only orally.

When I tell Mr. Sanders he hasn't made a very convincing case for Mr. Dmitrichev's having to physically attend this symposium, he exclaims: "I don't have to make a case! I don't have to defend myself!" When I remind him that he really does because I and other American taxpayers pay a portion of his salary and Mr. Dmitrichev's, he asks: "But what about the Dutch and Japanese taxpayers?"

Me: "Well, I feel sorry that they also have to pay for this kind of worthless junket."

Mr. Sanders accuses me of wanting "to abolish the U.N." I accuse him of defending the U.N.. Denouncing my "crazy hostility," Mr. Sanders says "you don't make much sense," but he says he would like to meet me anyway.

When I ask Mr. Sanders if Mr. Dmitrichev is a Soviet spy, he says: "I don't think so." And he adds

that the U.N. is not successful "because countries won't let it do what it is supposed to do."

But my question about the possibility of Mr. Dmitrichev being a spy is not just a gratuitous needle. A 1983 report by The Heritage Foundation says the Soviets "have stuffed the U.N. Secretariat with KGB spies, most of whom are known to the F.B.I." This study says:

"Soviet-bloc nationals in the U.N. Secretariat, assisted by communist-bloc nations, and by Third World Secretariat employees, have long been undermining the impartiality of the U.N. civil service, on occasion in open defiance of U.N. personnel policies. Former U.N. Under-Secretary-General Arkady Shevchenko, until his defection in 1978 the highest ranking Soviet civil service servant at the U.N., reports that the Soviets scoff at the very idea that international civil servants should be impartial. He reveals that over a third of all communist-bloc nationals in the Secretariat are officers of their respective secret police under the direct guidance of the KGB. Their activities range from the recruitment of Secretariat employees, and gathering political information from U.N. employees and diplomats, to using the U.N. as a base for espionage activities."

Observing that the FBI has long referred to U.N. headquarters as "the spy factory," this Heritage study says that more than 260 Soviets work at the U.N. Missions and about 250 work in the Office of the Secretariat. This Heritage study cites the following example of a "sabotaged report" involving the Office of the Secretariat:

-In 1981, the U.N. started an investigation of Soviet biochemical warfare activities in Afghanistan and surrounding regions. This investigation was overseen by U.N. Under-Secretary-General Ustinov "who used bureaucratic inertia and delaying tactics to stall and smother" it for many months. In February of 1982, a group of U.N. experts finally obtained some eyewitness testimony, medical findings, and physical evidence of biological warfare.

The Heritage report says: "This information has been quietly shelved (some say, suppressed) by Mr. Ustinov until it was leaked to 'The Wall Street Journal' on June 7, 1982. To date, the U.N. has done little to analyze the use of chemical warfare in Afghanistan by the Soviet Union despite ample evidence uncovered by reliable sources."

In another Heritage study, in May of last year, Mr. Shevchenko is quoted as saying that all Soviet U.N. employees have to turn their salaries over to the Soviet government and receive only a fraction in return. One Western diplomat says: "The whole world is underwriting their work." It is estimated that about \$15.2 million of the \$22.7 million paid each year to the Soviet U.N. Secretariat staff ends up in Moscow.

As one of her recommendations as to how to modify Soviet manipulation of the U.N.'s rules, Heritage Foundation Senior Analyst Juliana Pilon suggests the United States should seek to curtail the travel privileges of U.N. personnel from countries on the State Department's "restricted" list—which includes the U.S.S.R.

Good idea. This is the way to ground free-loading junketeers like Mr. Dmitrichev. And if the State Department won't do this, Congress should. Now.